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Newport, R.I.**

**A Conceptual Model of Counterinsurgency:
Understanding Elements, Factors, and Probability of Success**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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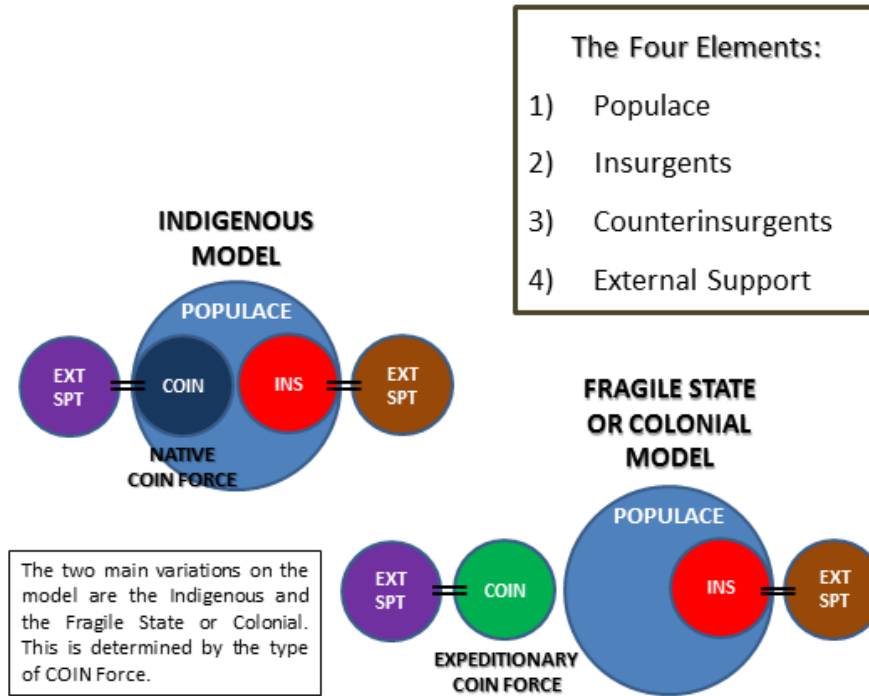
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Preface

The Counterinsurgency Model



The Four Factors:

Factor		Element influenced
1) Political Will		Counterinsurgents
2) Cause		Insurgents
3) Friction		All elements
4) Moral Factors		

Abstract

A Counterinsurgency Model: Understanding Elements, Factors, and Probability of Success

The U.S. military has been fighting large-scale insurgencies for a decade; yet a thorough understanding of this complex subset of warfare eludes many of those who are responsible for implementing counterinsurgency strategy at the local or regional level. However, the complex nature of insurgent warfare can be graphically modeled, and from this model one can deduce a relative probability of success. The U.S. Military should adopt this model into counterinsurgency doctrine in order to help leaders understand the structure of the problem, determine their objectives, and increase their probability of success. Understanding this model will be facilitated by exploring the primacy of the population followed by a descriptive study of the proposed counterinsurgency model. The advantages a native counterinsurgent force has over an expeditionary force will also be addressed. In the conclusion, the model will be applied to Operation Enduring Freedom and the decade of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.

“War is not a chess game but a vast social phenomenon with an infinitely greater and ever-expanding number of variables, some of which elude analysis.”¹
-- David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*

When David Galula penned the above quote in his seminal piece on counterinsurgency, he was referring to warfare in general, not specifically to any one type or style of warfare. Within the multifaceted and graduate-level nature of war, counterinsurgency is one of the most complex subsets of this field of study.² In his book *The Accidental Guerrilla*, David Kilcullen offers one view of current conflicts as hybrid wars that involve “a shifting combination of armed and unarmed, military and nonmilitary, state and nonstate, internal and international, and violent and nonviolent means.”³ Given this, it is not surprising that military leadership struggles with adapting the force and prosecuting this type of conflict. Counterinsurgency is often “messier, riskier, less predictable, and often nastier than intended.”⁴ During the study of the Algerian War (1954-1962) at the Naval War College, a professor posed the question of whether there was such a thing as an unwinnable insurgency. During the contemplation and analysis of that particular query, the following questions emerged:

- What are the main elements of a counterinsurgency?
- What are the best/worst conditions for the counterinsurgent?
- How can the counterinsurgent change the elements and conditions in his favor?
- Can this be depicted in a manner that will help assess the probability of success?

These four questions established the structure for this research. Several important aspects of counterinsurgency were studied through both a theoretical and historical lens.

¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), xi.

² U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-1.

³ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (New York, NY: Oxford, 2009), 4.

⁴ David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), v.

Most importantly, this research determined that the complex nature of insurgent warfare can be graphically modeled, and from this model one can deduce a relative probability of success. The U.S. military should adopt this model into counterinsurgency doctrine in order to help leaders understand the structure of the problem, determine their objectives, and increase their probability of success.

Understanding this model will be facilitated by exploring the *primacy of the population* followed by a descriptive study of the proposed counterinsurgency model. The variations of the model will then be comparatively assessed in order to help deduce the probability of success, at least relative to the other models. And finally, the advantages a native counterinsurgent force has in comparison to an expeditionary force will be evaluated. In the conclusion, the model will be applied to Operation Enduring Freedom and the decade of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.

THE COUNTERINSURGENCY MODEL – FOUR ELEMENTS

This paper offers a graphic depiction of a counterinsurgency model that can be modified to illustrate most insurgent/counterinsurgent relationships. A large part of this counterinsurgency model is theoretically based and does not have to be linked to a database of actual insurgencies in order to be of some use. However, the model is strengthened when applied to a list of historical insurgencies. In order to assess insurgency in a primarily post-colonial world, the database needs to exclude those that began prior to 1945. Field Manual 3-24, the Army's Counterinsurgency Manual, supports this assessment as it codifies the "modern era" of insurgencies as beginning after World War II.⁵ In 2008, RAND published a report entitled *War by Other Means* which was a counterinsurgency study researched and

⁵ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-19.

written at the behest of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In that research, Martin Libicki formed a list of 89 insurgencies and their results from 1945 to 2008. His criteria included at least 1,000 killed during the conflict with a minimum of 100 killed on each side. He also attempted to eliminate any revolution that should be more accurately classified as a “coup, countercoups, [or] spontaneous insurrection.”⁶ This list is found in the appendix.

The first three basic elements of the model proposed in this paper are the population, the insurgent, and the counterinsurgent. Of these elements, the foundation of the model is the *population*. The population is not only the centerpiece of the model; it is also meaningfully the largest of the elements. Over the past two years the phrases “win the population,” “the population is the prize,” and “win the hearts and minds” have become common in military vernacular, almost to the point of becoming cliché. However seemingly well-trod, one cannot overstate the importance of the population in insurgent warfare. Considering that a counterinsurgency campaign must be won at the company and platoon level, this succinct guidance for the youngest of Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen seems prudent.

The concept of the population being at the center of the insurgency/counterinsurgency problem is not a recent revelation, nor is it solely associated with the publishing of FM 3-24 in 2006. David Galula is credited with coining the phrase “the population is the prize” and explains this point in *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, first published in 1964. He surmised that due to the political nature of insurgent warfare, the “exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness.”⁷ Bob Woodward’s book, *Obama’s Wars*, brought to the forefront the debate between a population-

⁶ Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 373.

⁷ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), 4.

centric approach to Afghanistan versus an enemy-centric approach. These two approaches were referred to as a counterinsurgency strategy for the former and for the latter, counterterrorism plus.⁸ Kilcullen adds a third possible approach to counterinsurgency – terrain-centric. If you capture and hold the “key terrain, all else will follow.”⁹ This might be referred to as positional warfare.

These three approaches are not exclusive, as it is not a matter of choosing one over the other two. The word ‘approach’ is somewhat problematic as it connotes an exclusionary method of addressing the problem. For this reason, the most accurate label for the three options is *lines of operation*. The decision for the commander is how to weight his effort and allocate his resources simultaneously across all three lines. It is important to note that all three lines of operation ultimately take us back to the population (see Figure 1).

General McChrystal understood the primacy of the populace when he took command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2009. He endorsed a population-centric strategy and published it as operational guidance: “Our strategy cannot be focused on seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces; our objective must be the population.”¹⁰ One year later General Petraeus confirmed his predecessor’s assessment when he updated the ISAF Counterinsurgency Guidance. His first major bullet was “secure and serve the population” and referred to the Afghan people as both the “decisive terrain” and the “center

⁸ Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), e-book location 2897.

⁹ David Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Seminar 07,” *Small Wars Center of Excellence*, 26 September 2007, 10, <http://babylonscovertwar.com/Analysis/COIN-Kilcullen%20Small%20Wars%20Center%20of%20Excellence%20Seminar.pdf/> (accessed 20 February 2011).

¹⁰ General Stanley A. McChrystal, COMISAF, to Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum “COMISAF’s Initial Assessment,” 30 August 2009, 1-1.

of gravity.”¹¹ The key position the populace holds in the counterinsurgency/insurgency problem places them at the heart of the model and makes this element the most important.

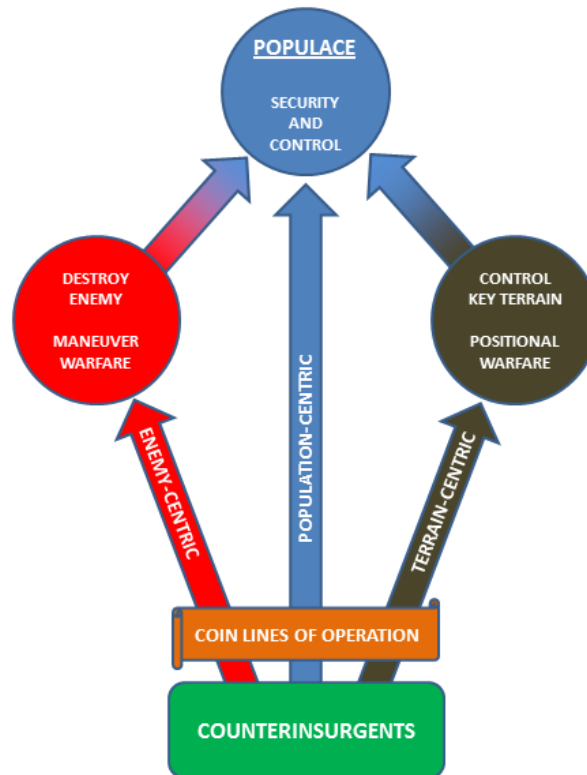


Figure 1
Counterinsurgency Lines of Operation¹² and
The Primacy of the Populace

The second element of the model is the *insurgent*. The insurgent will always consist of a preponderance of members of the population, although they may be influenced by

¹¹ General David H. Petraeus, COMISAF, to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians of NATO ISAF and US Forces-Afghanistan, Memorandum “COMISAF’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” 1 August 2010, 1.

¹² In his Counterinsurgency Seminar of 2007, David Kilcullen outlines the three possible approaches to counterinsurgency. This diagram is the graphic interpretation of his outline but interprets them to be lines of operation instead of approaches. See David Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Seminar 07,” *Small Wars Center of Excellence*, 26 September 2007, 10, <http://babylonscovertwar.com/Analysis/COIN-Kilcullen%20Small%20Wars%20Center%20of%20Excellence%20Seminar.pdf/> (accessed 20 February 2011).

external sources, causes, or support. The insurgent is depicted in the model as a red circle drawn within the populace.

The *counterinsurgent* is the subsequent building block of the model. As seen in Figure 2, there are two basic models. The first variation is called the *indigenous model* and is determined by the counterinsurgent force being native to the country and population. The other variation on the model has the counterinsurgent force from a third-party, or intervening country. This model will use the title of *fragile state*¹³ or *colonial*¹⁴ to describe situations where the counterinsurgent is an *expeditionary force*.¹⁵ The term fragile state is from

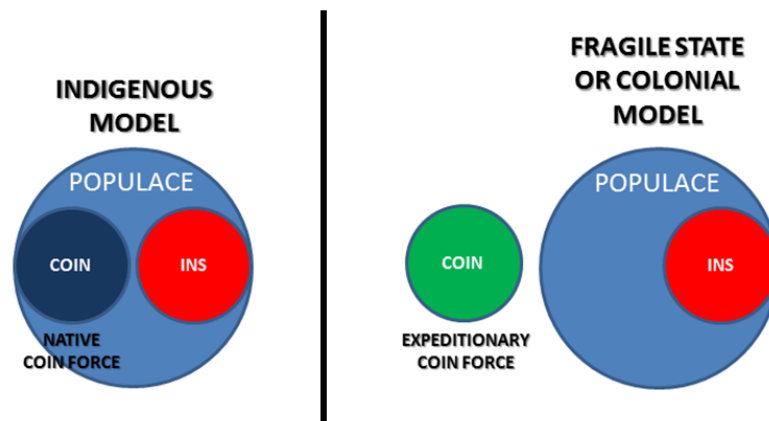


Figure 2
The Counterinsurgency Model – Two Basic Variations

Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, and is defined as a “broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states.”¹⁶ Due to the current global security environment, this most accurately describes the conditions which will likely dominate future insurgencies.

¹³ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-24 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 5 October 2009), x.

¹⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), xiv.

¹⁵ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), e-book location 251.

¹⁶ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-24 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 5 October 2009), x.

The first three elements of the counterinsurgency model provide a pictorial representation of an insurgency and place it in one of two categories. The fourth and final element is that of *external support* and is potentially applicable to both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent. Figure 3 depicts all available options for external support.

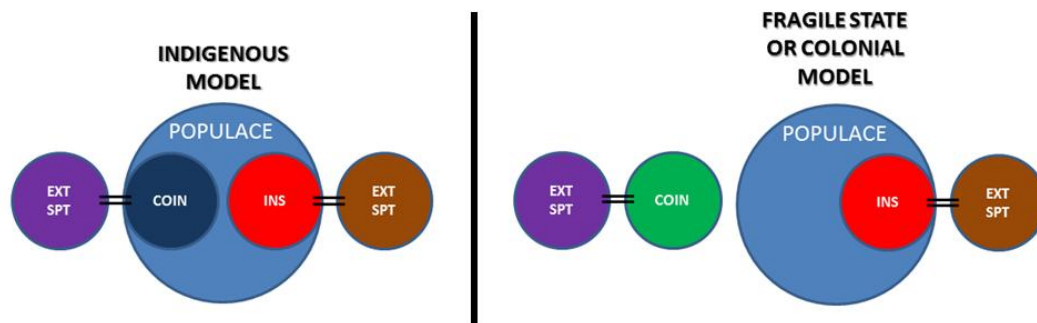


Figure 3
The Counterinsurgency Model – External Support

External support for the insurgents is the single most important ingredient to an insurgency – even more important than the insurgent’s cause. Modern insurgencies “with no outside support whatsoever have never won.”¹⁷ FM 3-24 identifies “reliance on external support” as one of the critical vulnerabilities for an insurgency.¹⁸ Chapter 1 of that manual also notes that it is “easier to separate an insurgency from its resources and let it die than [it is] to kill every insurgent.”¹⁹

External support to an insurgency can take many forms: financial support, weapons, training, manpower in the form of foreign fighters, perceived legitimacy, public opinion, or

¹⁷ Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 386.

¹⁸ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 1-23.

sanctuary. Of all of the above listed types of support, perhaps the most influential is that of sanctuary. RAND's analysis of the 89 insurgencies shows that when insurgents have "enjoyed sanctuary [they] have won almost half of the conflicts (23 out of 52)...while those that did not won very few."²⁰ This may or may not be formalized state support from the country providing sanctuary, depending on the level of control exerted over the neighboring populace by the host government. A good example of sanctuary with no overt state sponsorship would be the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.

There are great difficulties in prosecuting a counterinsurgency campaign in a country with vast borders that offer sanctuary to an insurgent. Understanding the importance of sanctuary for the insurgent, along with the manpower requirements to deny that sanctuary, help the counterinsurgent determine where to place his resources, weight his effort, and which approach, or line of operation, will be the most effective. Vietnam is another example, with its long Cambodian and Laotian borders, where sanctuary posed insurmountable issues for counterinsurgents using an enemy-centric approach. A "fluid" enemy, who has sanctuary available, "can control his loss rate and can never be eradicated by purely enemy-centric means."²¹ Example cases of Sri Lanka and Malaya demonstrate where geography limits or negates external support and specifically eliminates sanctuary. In these cases, the counterinsurgent has the freedom to place more effort on an enemy-centric line of operation with increased chances of success. Sanctuary has such impact on the insurgent that it is

²⁰ Martin C. Libicki, "Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings," in *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 387-388.

²¹ David Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency Seminar 07," *Small Wars Center of Excellence*, 26 September 2007, 10, <http://babylonscovertwar.com/Analysis/COIN-Kilcullen%20Small%20Wars%20Center%20of%20Exelence%20Seminar.pdf/> (accessed 20 February 2011).

addressed as a tremendous “help”²² in RAND’s conclusions, as it is numerous times throughout counterinsurgency theory.

On the other side of the model is external support for the counterinsurgent. Support for the counterinsurgent is most commonly classified in two categories: direct and indirect. RAND defines direct support as ground troops or bombing while indirect support would include money or advisors.²³ A supporting country must recognize that all support is not equal, and there will be circumstances where one type of external support will be more effective than the other. Statistically, direct external support seems to increase the likelihood of a mixed settlement.²⁴ This third-party interjection affects the willingness to negotiate and provides a vehicle for potential compromise and concession, such as the integration of those with grievances into the political process.

THE COUNTERINSURGENCY MODEL – FOUR FACTORS

Just as there were four elements of the counterinsurgency model, there are also four main factors that influence the model. These four factors are depicted as arrows impacting the model at specific points and are shown in Figure 4. The first of those arrows is the *cause*, or the goals, of the insurgent. Causes can have great variance from one insurgency to another. With this variance significant impacts can arise on the outcome of the insurgency due to the ability of the insurgent to promote his cause and to influence the population.

²² Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in In, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 395.

²³ Ibid, 391.

²⁴ Ibid, 391-392.

The most effective cause is independence or majority rule. RAND found “insurgencies that seek independence or majority rule have generally succeeded.”²⁵ In the data set there are nine insurgencies that fall into the category associated with independence. Eight of them have ended up with the government, or counterinsurgents, losing – the one exception being the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya (1952 – 1960). Although the British were able to suppress this uprising, they gave the Kenyans their independence seven years later.²⁶ FM 3-24 recommends isolating the insurgents from their cause.²⁷ An illustrative example of this was the actions taken by Great Britain during the Malayan Emergency (1948 – 1960). The British gave Malaya independence in 1957 thereby devaluing and directly attacking the cause of the insurgents. Coupling this with several other programs and techniques, Great Britain was able to transition autonomy on their terms, thus preventing Malaya from falling to a communist insurgency.

The second factor that influences the model is that of *political will*. This factor influences the counterinsurgent and does so regardless of whether or not it is the indigenous model or the fragile state/colonial model. Of all aspects regarding an insurgency, nothing necessitates the requirement for political will more than the duration of the conflict. Of the 89 studied insurgencies, 73 had concluded by 2008. Of those 73 insurgencies, the average duration was just over 12 years in length. The average insurgency will transcend most prime ministers, presidents, and in the case of the Algerian War, not only outlasted, but facilitated the demise of the French Fourth Republic. FM 3-24 codifies these challenges by noting that

²⁵ Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 395.

²⁶ Ibid, 382.

²⁷ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-23.

“COIN campaigns are often long and difficult. Progress can be hard to measure, and the enemy may appear to have many advantages.”²⁸ Due to the factor of time associated with insurgency, efforts to keep the counterinsurgent on track are challenged by a desire to speed

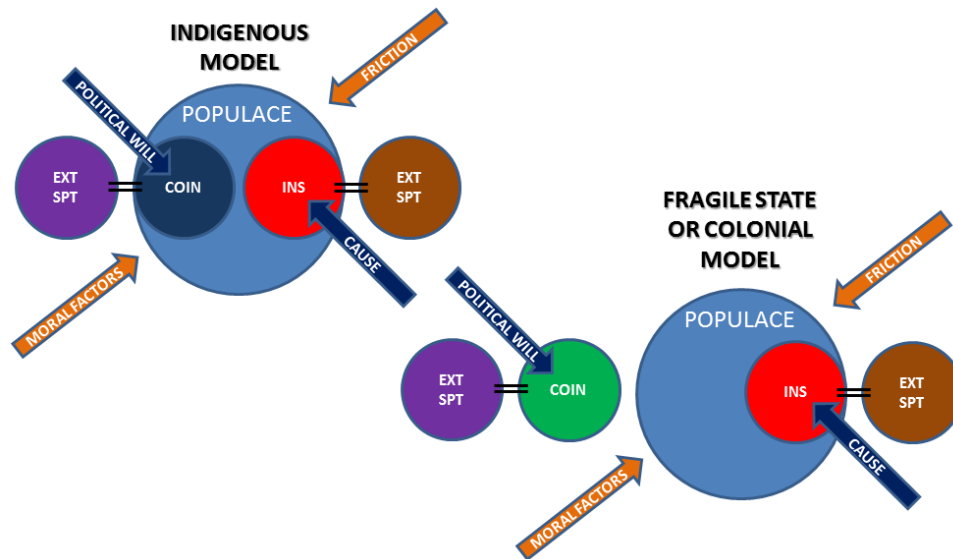


Figure 4
The Counterinsurgency Model – The Four Factors

along results. This desire may cause the counterinsurgent to shift his strategy. Changing strategy with the hopes of speeding results will most likely have negative impacts to the campaign and may lead to an undesirable outcome for the counterinsurgent. This is one of the significant consequences of waning political will.

Another aspect of political will is that of cost. The U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide expresses counterinsurgency as a high-cost commitment “in terms of financial cost, political capital, military resources and human life.”²⁹ Even with an assumption of required effort and resources, counterinsurgency “campaigns have almost

²⁸ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-23, x.

²⁹ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 12, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

always been more costly, more protracted and more difficult than first anticipated.”³⁰ Galula expresses this with the simple phrase, “insurgency is cheap, counterinsurgency costly.”³¹ Governments conducting counterinsurgency with an expeditionary force or providing external support to another counterinsurgent force frequently do not have the patience to sustain the required level of effort for a decade or more. The actor who is more motivated to see it through to the end is the native counterinsurgent due to the fact that the future of his own country is at stake.

The last two factors to complete the model are those of friction and moral factors. They exert their influence over the model as a whole. Clausewitz describes friction as “the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult.”³² This is nowhere as true as it is in an insurgency. Clausewitz also is the source for the opposing arrow – moral factors. He defines his principle moral factors as “the skill of the commander, the experience and courage of the troops, and their patriotic spirit.”³³ Although Clausewitz is the source of modern day understanding of friction and moral factors in warfare, the graphic interpretation on how they influence this model comes from Vice Admiral McRaven and his work on *The Theory of Special Operations*.³⁴ Although McRaven changes the definition of moral factors (courage, intellect, boldness, perseverance), the essence is the same and it provides us an understanding on how one or both can influence an insurgency. These two factors are difficult to identify

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 3, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

³¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), 6.

³² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 121.

³³ Ibid, 186.

³⁴ William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Presidio Press, 1995), 11.

and impossible to quantify. They are usually found among the reasons behind unexpected results in the outcome of an insurgency.

THE PROBABILITY SCALE

With a developed and defined model of counterinsurgency, the question is what does one do with it? The utility in this model is two-fold. First, graphically depicting a complex scenario can aid with the understanding of past or current insurgencies, and it can also help commanders as they define their objective. Second, through analysis of past insurgencies and their results, one can begin to tease out the probability of success based upon the elements and factors of the model. For example, the most advantageous condition for the counterinsurgent would be the indigenous model with direct external support for the native counterinsurgent force. The most disadvantageous model would be the fragile state or colonial variation facing a well-supported insurgency. These two scenarios are depicted in Figure 5.

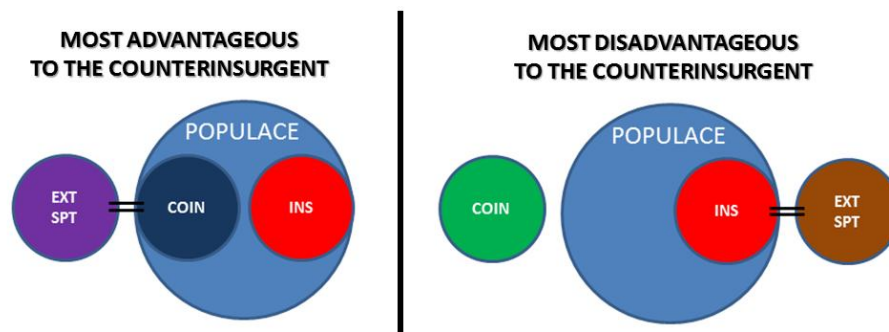


Figure 5
The Counterinsurgency Model – Best and Worst Scenarios

There is very little that is certain in an insurgency. David Galula believed that other than just a few notable exceptions, “victory in most...recent revolutionary wars could

possibly have gone to either camp.”³⁵ The challenge is then to determine how the models array in terms of probability of the counterinsurgent winning. Since no modern insurgency has won without external support, all those variations belong at the top of the spectrum. The dominant factor is the lack of support for the insurgents (see Figure 6).

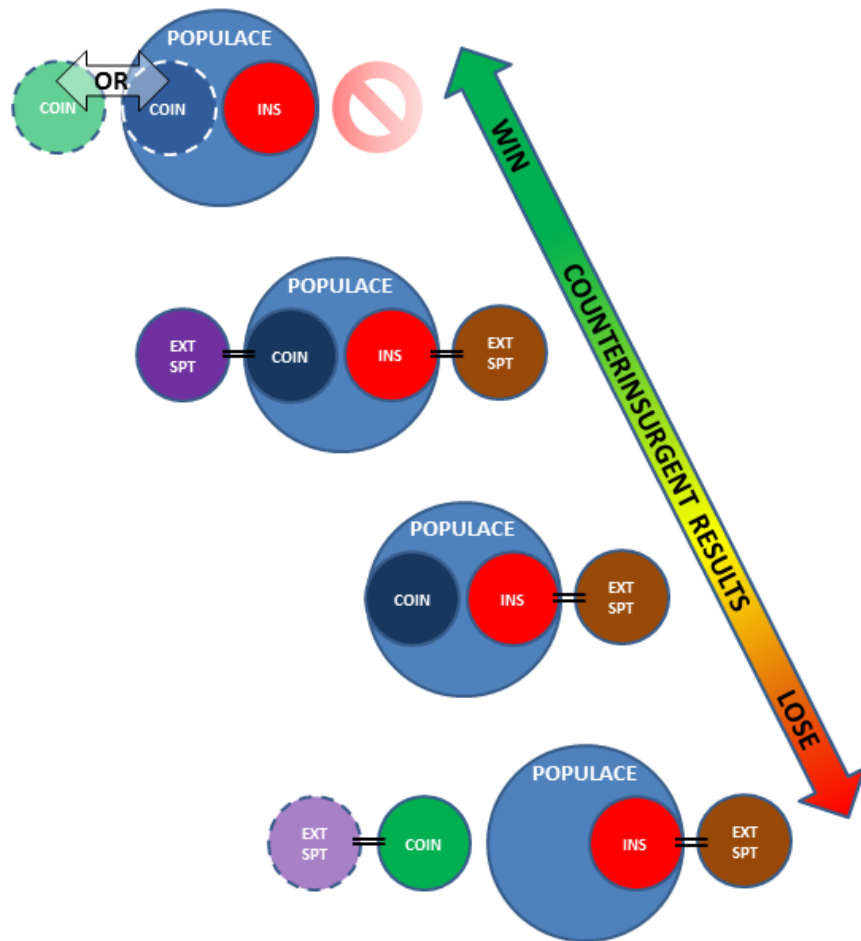


Figure 6
Counterinsurgent Probability of Success

At the other end of the spectrum is the fragile state or colonial model with an externally well-supported insurgency. External support for the expeditionary force is rare

³⁵ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), 96.

and does not bear on the eventual outcome of the conflict in this example. As discussed previously, an expeditionary force faces a great number of challenges; one of which is that “the insurgents live in the country and never plan to leave, whereas the intervening force must eventually plan on transition and departure. The population knows this and is therefore less likely to support it.”³⁶ The other issue with this model is that the cause of independence or majority rule is most often associated with a colonial model. This cause lends itself to support from the population and, as such, has the highest success rate for the insurgents.

This leaves two versions of the indigenous model – one where the native COIN force is supported and the other where the native COIN force is unsupported. Due to the nature of support for the native COIN force and the impact it has on the outcome, these two variations of the model can be ranked in terms of success and this completes the chart in Figure 6.

NATIVE COUNTERINSURGENT FORCE

Through the analysis of this counterinsurgency model and the conditions required to set the best chances for success, one predominant condition emerges – a robust native counterinsurgent force. An effective native COIN force is identified in FM 3-24 as the key to defeating the insurgents or rendering them irrelevant, upholding the rule of law, and providing security and essential services for the populace. These tasks are necessary to establish “a legitimate government supported by the people and able to address the fundamental causes that insurgents use to gain support.”³⁷ This native COIN force includes all levels of security from the military to the border guards.

³⁶ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 13, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

³⁷ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), 6-1.

The impact of the native COIN force is no more apparent than in the writings of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Ayman al-Zawahiri. In Zarqawi's 2004 letter to al Qaeda, he notes that the "Crusader forces" will disappear one day but the Iraqi forces were "the real danger that we face, for it is [made up of] our fellow countrymen, who know us inside and out."³⁸ The impact the Iraqi forces had on the insurgents was dramatic. Zarqawi continues, "There is no doubt that the space in which we can move has begun to shrink... With the deployment of soldiers and police, the future has become frightening."³⁹ Zawahiri echoed that same theme in a letter of response where he wrote, "the real danger comes from the agent Pakistani army that is carrying out operations in the tribal areas looking for mujahedeen."⁴⁰

Another facet of recruiting, training, and deploying a native COIN force is the impact on the overall force ratio in the insurgency. In general, the greater the force ratio in favor of the counterinsurgents – the better the odds are of the government winning. With the advantage of numbers and the ability to provide local security and stability throughout a country or region, the counterinsurgent will be able to separate the insurgent from the populace and will begin to render them ineffective. Due to the labor-intensive nature of counterinsurgency operations and the ratios required to implement an effective policy, it is extremely difficult to operate with a preponderance of the force being expeditionary. In order to be successful, the operational objective should align with the 'man, train, and equip' requirements of the local police force and indigenous army.

³⁸ Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to al-Qaeda, letter, February 2004, 2, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/state/31694.htm>.

³⁹ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁰ Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, letter, 9 July 2005, 1, http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/letter_in_english.pdf.

COUNTERTERRORISM PLUS AND INDIRECT SUPPORT

This model draws attention to the decisive impact of fighting an insurgency with a population-centric mindset and a native counterinsurgent force. There is a counter-argument to this counterinsurgency theory and the recommendations that come from this model. The counter-argument is centered around the immense cost of counterinsurgency in terms of blood, dollars, and time. Bob Woodward's book, *Obama's Wars*, highlighted this in the light of recent decision-making concerning Operation Enduring Freedom.

In this book Vice President Biden argues passionately on behalf of an enemy-centric approach, referred to as the counterterrorism plus strategy.⁴¹ This would require the minimum number of additional troops (and cost) with the hope of still changing the situation on the ground in Afghanistan for the better. It was not only focused on the enemy-centric approach to the insurgency, but it would also focus a great deal of effort and resources on the sanctuary the insurgents and al Qaeda enjoyed across the border in the FATA. The Vice President approached this problem in terms of cost and resources with the intention of finding "a more efficient way"⁴² to support Afghanistan.

The counterterrorism plus strategy did have one aspect that is supported by this paper – training more Afghan forces. The advantages of a native counterinsurgent force have been argued in the preceding pages. However, at issue with the proposed strategy is the recommended shift in the weight of effort given to the enemy-centric line of operation. If ISAF were to shift their focus to the FATA and al Qaeda, the security conditions in Afghanistan would never be achieved to the degree to allow a successful transition to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and local governance. While great efforts might

⁴¹ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), e-book location 2880.

⁴² Ibid, e-book location 2863.

have been spent dealing with an elusive enemy, hiding in a vast and uncontrollable sanctuary – behind the backs of the counterinsurgents they would be losing the population – the very object of the campaign.

There is a fundamental problem with the “efficient” approach to counterinsurgency. Robert Komer identified similar issues with the U.S. approach to Vietnam when he classified the counterinsurgency efforts there as an “incremental response—minimum necessary at each stage, short-term approach.”⁴³ It is important to realize that unobtrusive, minimal, and indirect support for an *insurgent* can be effective, but the rules for the insurgent are not the same as for the counterinsurgent. Some confusion comes from indirect support that the U.S. has provided in the past garnering tremendous results. Most notably, the indirect support of the insurgent (Mujahideen) in Afghanistan, as they fought the Soviets during the 1980’s, provides one recent example. However, providing effective indirect support to the insurgent does not equate to that same level of support being effective for the counterinsurgent. Galula is critical of Mao Tse-tung in the regard that Mao’s “laws of revolutionary warfare” are only applicable for the side of the revolutionary, not the counterrevolutionary, or counter-insurgent.⁴⁴

There are positive examples of the U.S. providing smaller direct or indirect support to the counterinsurgent (El Salvador, Colombia, Philippines), but the key is to evaluate accurately the level of support that will achieve the desired effects. That can only be accomplished through assessment of the elements, the cause fueling the insurgency, and the political will motivating the counterinsurgent.

⁴³ Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy does its thing: institutional constraints on U.S.-GVN performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1972), v-xiii.

⁴⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), xiii.

The struggle depicted in *Obama's Wars* ended with a decision by President Obama to support General McChrystal's recommended counterinsurgency strategy. Secretary Gates was quoted as saying "that the Afghan National Army and National Police would be the key—increasing their number, their training, professionalism, and commitment. 'That's our ticket out.'" ⁴⁵ Increasing the size of the ANSF and focusing the military on the ministries of defense and interior was captured as two of the operational objectives in President Obama's Terms Sheet. ⁴⁶ Ultimately, the decision was to build a native counterinsurgent force within the construct of a population-focused counterinsurgency campaign.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the tremendous challenges of prosecuting a counterinsurgency campaign is the ever-changing dynamic of the conditions on the ground. This requires that the situation be "continuously reassessed and the relative success of insurgent and counterinsurgent should be evaluated." ⁴⁷ FM 3-24 supports this assertion and refers to the side that does the more thorough and continuous reassessment as the "better learning organization" and notes that the "side that learns faster and adapts more rapidly...usually wins." ⁴⁸

Using Operation Enduring Freedom as an illustrative example, Figure 7 depicts three different years of that insurgency and plots them against the Probability of Success Scale. The first iteration of the model starts at the bottom of the figure in 2002 with an expeditionary counterinsurgent force against an insurgency comprised of al Qaeda (AQ), the Taliban (QST), and anti-coalition militia (ACM) supported by the sanctuary of Pakistan and

⁴⁵ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), e-book location 1958.

⁴⁶ Ibid, e-book location 6431.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 47, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

⁴⁸ U.S. Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2006), ix.

the international organization of al Qaeda. That transitions to 2010 as the counterinsurgent force is being filled out with both Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and ISAF.

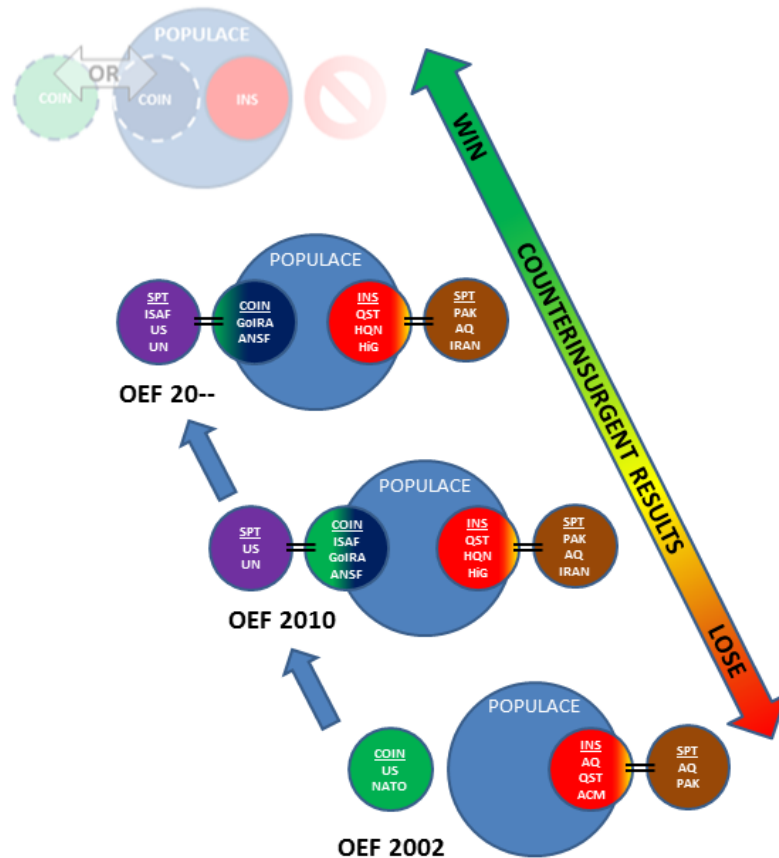


Figure 7
Counterinsurgent Probability of Success – OEF Example

By this time, significant external support has emerged for the counterinsurgents and the insurgency has changed to elements of the Afghan Taliban (QST), Hizb-i-Islami – Gulbuddin (HiG), and Haqqani (HQN) networks. At some point in the future, Afghanistan will assume almost the entire role for the counterinsurgent force, as depicted in the third model, and the U.S. and ISAF will transition their role to almost wholly external support.

While understanding the counterinsurgent could never completely sever the ties of external support for the insurgency, the efforts of the U.S., ISAF, and the Afghan government have significantly changed the OEF counterinsurgency model over the years and are moving the model to the best possible chance of success. Ultimate success will rely on the political will of both the Afghan government and the international community.

The model in Figure 7 highlights a significant difference between the Soviet experience in Afghanistan (1978 – 1992) and the current efforts of ISAF. While the Soviet Union was stagnant with an expeditionary force facing a well-supported insurgency and ultimately lost, as predicted by the model, the U.S. and ISAF have transitioned from that same end of the spectrum and have significantly changed their counterinsurgency operational concept.

Fighting a well-supported insurgency is one of the most difficult tasks any government can undertake. Not only is it an incredibly complex political-military struggle, but progress is difficult to measure and “success in COIN can be difficult to define.”⁴⁹ The goal of this paper was to advance the understanding of the counterinsurgency/insurgency dynamic by furthering the discussion of four points. First, the primacy of the populace lies at the heart of the problem and the counterinsurgent needs to understand how the lines of operation interact. Second, knowledge of the elements and factors of the model will act as an aid to understanding counterinsurgency theory. Third, the native counterinsurgent force does not merely replace an expeditionary force on a one-for-one exchange of manpower. The understanding the native force brings with it in terms of “geography, culture, history,

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 4, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

sociology and politics”⁵⁰ is a combat multiplier that truly threatens the insurgent. And finally, understanding the conditions that are advantageous and disadvantageous to the counterinsurgent will help the military commander determine his objective – an objective that will best set the conditions for success.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, January 2009), 13, <http://www.state.gov/pm/ppa/pmppt/> (accessed 12 December 2010).

Appendix

Eight-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings⁵¹

Martin C. Libicki

Table A.1
The 89 Insurgencies

Insurgency	Start Year	End Year	Result
Greece	1945	1949	Government Wins
Philippines (HUK Rebellion)	1946	1955	Government Wins
Burma	1948	2006	Government Wins
Malaya	1948	1960	Government Wins
Kenya	1952	1956	Government Wins
Indonesia (Daru Islam)	1958	1960	Government Wins
Lebanon	1958	1959	Government Wins
Tibet	1959	1974	Government Wins
Congo/Katanga	1960	1965	Government Wins
Guatemala	1960	1996	Government Wins
Iraq Kurdistan	1961	1974	Government Wins
Uruguay	1963	1973	Government Wins
Biafran Secession	1967	1970	Government Wins
Argentina	1968	1979	Government Wins
Northern Ireland	1969	1999	Government Wins
Jordan	1970	1971	Government Wins
Philippines (MNLF)	1971	1996	Government Wins
Balochistan	1973	1977	Government Wins
Angola (UNITA)	1975	2002	Government Wins
Morocco	1975	1991	Government Wins
Indonesia (Aceh)	1976	2005	Government Wins
Philippines (MILF)	1977	2006	Government Wins
Peru	1981	1992	Government Wins
Turkey (PKK)	1984	1999	Government Wins
Uganda (ADF)	1986	2000	Government Wins
Sierra Leone	1991	2002	Government Wins
Algeria (GIA)	1992	2004	Government Wins
Croatia	1992	1995	Government Wins
Colombia (La Violencia)	1948	1962	Mixed Outcome
Yemen	1962	1970	Mixed Outcome
Dominican Republic	1965	1966	Mixed Outcome

⁵¹ Martin C. Libicki, "Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings," in In, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, ed. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 373 – 377.

East Timor	1975	2000	Mixed Outcome
Lebanese Civil War	1975	1990	Mixed Outcome
Mozambique (RENAMO)	1976	1995	Mixed Outcome
Kampuchea	1978	1992	Mixed Outcome
El Salvador	1979	1992	Mixed Outcome
Senegal	1980	2002	Mixed Outcome
Nicaragua (Contras)	1981	1990	Mixed Outcome
Papua New Guinea	1988	1998	Mixed Outcome
Bosnia	1992	1995	Mixed Outcome
Georgia/Abkhazia	1992	1994	Mixed Outcome
Nagorno-Karabkh	1992	1994	Mixed Outcome
Tajikistan	1992	1997	Mixed Outcome
Burundi	1993	2003	Mixed Outcome
Chechnya I	1994	1996	Mixed Outcome
Kosovo	1996	1999	Mixed Outcome
Nepal	1997	2006	Mixed Outcome
Congo (anti-Kabila)	1998	2003	Mixed Outcome
China	1934	1950	Government Loses
Indochina	1946	1954	Government Loses
Cuba	1953	1959	Government Loses
Algerian Independence	1954	1962	Government Loses
Eritrea	1960	1993	Government Loses
Laos	1960	1975	Government Loses
Namibia	1960	1989	Government Loses
South Africa	1960	1994	Government Loses
South Vietnam	1960	1975	Government Loses
Angolan Independence	1962	1974	Government Loses
Guinea-Bissau	1962	1974	Government Loses
Mozambique Independence	1962	1974	Government Loses
Zimbabwe	1965	1980	Government Loses
Cambodia	1968	1975	Government Loses
Bangladesh	1971	1972	Government Loses
Afghanistan (anti-Soviet)	1978	1992	Government Loses
Nicaragua (Somoza)	1978	1979	Government Loses
Somalia	1980	1991	Government Loses
Sudan (SPLA)	1984	2004	Government Loses
Liberia	1989	1997	Government Loses
Moldova	1990	1992	Government Loses
Rwanda	1990	1994	Government Loses
Afghanistan (post-Soviet)	1992	1996	Government Loses
Afghanistan (Taliban)	1996	2001	Government Loses
Zaire (anti-Mobutu)	1996	1997	Government Loses
Colombia (FARC)	1963		Ongoing

Philippines (NPA)	1969	Ongoing
India Northeast	1975	Ongoing
Sri Lanka	1976	Ongoing
India-Naxalite	1980	Ongoing
Uganda (LRA)	1987	Ongoing
Kashmir	1989	Ongoing
Nigeria (Niger Delta)	1991	Ongoing
Somalian (post-Barre)	1991	Ongoing
Chechnya II	1999	Ongoing
Israel	2000	Ongoing
Afghanistan (anti-Coalition)	2001	Ongoing
Ivory Coast	2002	Ongoing
Darfur	2003	Ongoing
Iraq	2003	Ongoing
South Thailand	2004	Ongoing

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